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Introductory Comments

Abstract

The twelfth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* (2023) contains a thematic block titled *Centre-Periphery Relation and the Formation of Collective and Individual Identities in the Balkans and Central Europe*. The topic makes readers aware how variable centres and peripheries are and how unstable borders can be, not only in the Balkans and Central or Eastern Europe. A wider perspective on the subject is brought by the example of the settlement of Vlachs, who crossed the borders of countries and empires, and also by the context of Western European culture that we find in postimperial Georgia in the years 1918–1921 and in the cross-cultural art of Chinese artist Pan Jianfeng who lives in Finland. The reviews found in issue 12 supplement the subject matter with Siberian and Balkan illustrations. In the *Materials* section we publish a letter, recently discovered in the Petko and Pencho Slaveykov Museum in Sofia, from the son of Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Władysław (1838–1926), to Bulgarian poet Pencho Slaveykov (1866–1912).

Keywords: *Colloquia Humanistica* 12, *Centre-Periphery Relation and the Formation of Collective and Individual Identities in the Balkans and Central Europe*, Vlachs/Wallachians, Georgia, Pan Jianfeng, Władysława Mickiewicz's *Letter to Pencho Slaveykov*.

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Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor-in-chief: Jolanta Sujecka

Conception and academic editing: Wojciech Sajkowski

The twelfth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* contains the thematic block *Centre-Periphery Relation and the Formation of Collective and Individual Identities in the Balkans and Central Europe* prepared by our fellow editor, Professor Wojciech Sajkowski. The topic activates reflection about borders as well as centres and peripheries, i.e. a discussion that has been with us since the annual's inception in 2012. This time the papers making up the issue provide geographically, temporally and culturally extensive illustrations.

Using the example of *Ius Valachicum*, Jan Buniowski outlines the colonisation of borderland areas that began in the late Middle Ages in Central as well as South-Eastern Europe, while Wojciech Sajkowski, in a kind of continuation, considers the Vlachs in the context of Dalmatia under French rule.

In a paper focusing on a brief but extremely significant period of Georgia's independence after leaving the Romanov Empire and before being subordinated to the Soviet Union (1918–1921), Vazha Shatberashvili shows how relative geographical borders are. Georgia – on the borderland of Europe and Asia – was culturally part of the West for a short time in the 20th century, which is noticeably affecting its contemporary choices as well.

Antony Hoyte-West's paper reminds us that a borderland may be a periphery, and this is how Central Europe was perceived in the 19th century: as a territory between empires; at the same time, though, part of this area formed the westernmost province of Russia at the time (Krzysztof Latawiec).

Presenting Dubrovnik from the perspective of Serbian history and culture, Damian Kubik also highlights the borderland character of a city that is essentially part of the Mediterranean region but also belongs to several national cultures.

Karolina Pawlik's paper on Chinese artist Pan Jianfeng's *Roses in the Dark* cycle deserves its separate place in our thematic block. The author justifiably questions the division into East and West, using arguments based on an in-depth analysis of Pan Jianfeng's art, which – true to the trends of our times – is transnational and transregional. Quite rightly, the analysis of this extraordinary work of art focuses on capturing interconnected artistic impulses rooted in various periods and diverse artistic circles. It is impossible not to agree with the author's conclusion that art knows no borders, the only possible division being into brilliant works and those lacking originality.

In the *Materials* section of this year's issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* we publish a *Letter*, recently discovered in Sofia by Katia Zografova of the Nikola Vaptsarov Museum, from Władysław Mickiewicz (1838–1926), the son of great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), to Bulgarian poet Pencho Slaveykov, a modernist affiliated with the Thought group and the journal *Мисъл* [Thought] (1892–1907). Dated 8 February 1899, the *Letter* was discovered in the Petko and Pencho Slaveykov Museum in Sofia. We publish the *Letter* in its original French transliteration, to which we have added the Polish and English versions. We also publish the original *Letter*, courtesy of Ms. Zografova. Władysław Mickiewicz's letter reveals the very extensive historical, cultural and literary Polish-Bulgarian contacts in the 19th century, which were the effect of the activity of the Hôtel Lambert group, but also of a fascination with the Polish Romantic poets, and especially Adam Mickiewicz's poetry, among Slavs in the Balkans. The *Letter*'s content suggests that there may have been an ongoing correspondence between Pencho Slaveykov and Władysław Mickiewicz. For now, we only have the one *Letter* discovered in Sofia, but it might be the beginning of further discoveries.¹

In the *Discussions. Book reviews. Presentations* section we publish one paper and two reviews of very interesting monographs. Roman Mykhalchuk analyses some unique oral history sources connected with the Shoah, published by the Yahad-In Unum institution in Paris and originating from territories occupied by the Nazis within the Volhynia-Podolia General District that was part of Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Mykhalchuk's paper is the first presentation and analysis of oral history sources from this area. The author makes us aware of the extraordinary value and research potential of the materials in question. He analyses the narratives of witnesses to the events they speak about, which – when juxtaposed with Soviet and German materials – enable a more complete picture of the Shoah in that region to be reconstructed.

Tomasz Ewertowski's review titled, "Sieroszewski, Poland, Sakha: Questions of Identity", presents *Jakuckie prace Wacława Sieroszewskiego i zmiany kulturowe narodu Sacha* [Wacław Sieroszewski's Yakut Works and the Sakha Nation's Cultural Changes], a book by Kyunney Takasaeva

¹ Professor Andrzej Biernat maintains that the Władysław Mickiewicz archive is very scattered. The Museum of Literature in Warsaw houses two parts of it (a donation from Maria Mickiewicz and the so-called Deposit of the Polish Library in Paris). The name Pencho Slaveykov is not found in the catalogues there.

(Künnej Takaahaj) published by Wydawnictwo DiG. The book is an analysis of works by Waław Sieroszewski (1858–1945), a man with an unusual biography: a participant in the January Uprising of 1863 who was exiled to Siberia, a traveller, ethnographer and researcher of the Yakuts and their beliefs and, finally, MP in the Third Term Sejm and senator in the Fourth Term Senate in the Second Republic of Poland. At the same time, the book's author expands her monograph to include identity issues connected with the Yakuts (Sakha) and their history.

Pál Száz's paper offers a discussion related to Balkan issues, presenting two books by Zoran Milutinović about Ivo Andrić (1892–1968), the only Yugoslav Nobel laureate in literature (1961). The first book, *Bitka za prošlost. Ivo Andrić i bošnjački nacionalizam* [The Battle for the Past: Ivo Andrić and Bosnian Nationalism] published in 2018, focuses on the great writer's identity: he described himself as a Yugoslav, wrote in the Serbian variant of the Serbo-Croatian language of his time, and was born in Bosnia in a Catholic Croatian family. Both of Milutinović's monographs are very good illustrations of the struggle between nationalist narratives – the Bosnian and the Greater Serbian – over a writer whose multitiered identity is impossible to invalidate.

Through its thematic block devoted to the fluctuating history of centres and peripheries, to cultural systems and their unstable borders, and also thanks to reviews that supplement the main topic with additional illustrations, the twelfth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* shows us a world undergoing great change. Meanwhile, the *Materials* section adjusts the Polish perspective on the reception of our great Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz's oeuvre. The Polish perception, usually directed towards the West, suddenly has to change direction and take an interest in the Balkans which provide unexpected material discoveries connected with Polish literature.

I wish you all good reading.

Jolanta Sujecka
Warsaw, 4 December 2023

Uwagi wstępne

Dwunasty numer „Colloquia Humanistica” (2023) zawiera blok tematyczny zatytułowany: *Centre-Periphery Relation and the Formation of Collective and Individual Identities in the Balkans and Central Europe*. Temat bloku uzmysławia nam czytelnikom zmienność centrów i peryferii, a także labilność granic nie tylko w odniesieniu do Bałkanów i Europy Środkowej czy Wschodniej. Szerszą perspektywę tytułowej problematyce bloku przynosi zarówno przywołanie osadnictwa Wołochów, którzy przekraczali granice państw i imperiów, jak też kontekst zachodnioeuropejskiej kultury, który odnajdujemy w postimperialnej Gruzji w latach 1918–1921, czy wreszcie ponadnarodowa sztuka mieszkającego w Finlandii chińskiego artysty Pan Jianfenga. Opublikowane w dwunastym numerze recenzje dopełniają ilustracjami syberyjskimi i bałkańskimi tytułową problematykę. W dziale *Materials* publikujemy *List* syna Adama Mickiewicza (1798–1855), Władysława (1838–1926), do bułgarskiego poety Penczo Sławejkowa (1866–1912) właśnie odnaleziony w Muzeum Petko i Penczo Sławejkowów w Sofii.

Słowa kluczowe: „Colloquia Humanistica” 12, *Centre-Periphery Relation and the Formation of Collective and Individual Identities in the Balkans and Central Europe*, Wołosi, Gruzja, Pan Jianfeng, *List* Władysława Mickiewicza do Penczo Sławejkowa.

Note

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The preparation of this article was self-funded by the author.

The author is the editor-in-chief of the journal.

Publication History

Received: 2023-11-28, Accepted: 2023-12-05, Published: 2023-12-23

